

## BY BRET HARTE.

PART II.

## CHAPTER V.

But Brant appeared not to notice it. He was, in fact, puzzling his brain to conceive what information the stupid woman could have obtained. She must have been like the trembling old woman before him, a mere tool of others.

"Did this woman live here?" he said. "No," she said. "She lived with the Major and his friends whom she visited at your General's headquarters."

With difficulty Brant began to start. It was clear to him now. The information had been obtained at division camp as being a member of the confederated lines. But what was the intention and what movement had he precipitated? It was clear that this woman did not know. He looked at her keenly. A sudden eddying breeze swept the earth, drift of smoke passed the window—she had burst in the garden.

She had been gazing at him despair-

near were not threatened, as they might have been by a division of so large an attacking column, and his retreat was still secure! It was this fact that seemed to show a failure or imperfection in the German plan, and that was the cause of the precipitation of the attack by the British. The changed signal had been the cause of it. Doubtless some provision had been made to attack him in flank and rear, but the hurry of the German command set it had to be abandoned. He could still save himself, as his officers knew well, but his conviction that he might yet be able to support his division commander for a few days was too strong for him to be coolly awaiting his opportunity to die strong. More than that, it was the temperament and instinct.

Harroving them in flank and rear, contesting the ground inch by inch, he had been fighting the artillery, and sent to dislodge him, or the cavalry had curled round to ride through his open

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the window—when Miss Faulkner had replaced the vase—and had avoided his position. It was impossible to limit the damage to this order. If the young girl who had thus reached the division commander with his message in time, he might be forewarned, and even profit by it. His own position would be less precarious, as he would have time to get ready. But he would be unable to recover their position in the rear and correct the blunder. The bulk of their column had already streamed past him. If defeated, there was no danger that it might be rolled back upon him. He conjectured that the division commander would attempt to prevent the junction of the supports with the main column by breaking between them, and thus saving the rear guard. The young man, as the last stragglers of the rear guard swept by Brant's bugles, were already recalling the skirmishes.

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